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The Luxnor family house is seen in this view of the 1938 flood. This is looking south across Coal Creek on Third Avenue. The house was moved from that site and is now located at 202 W. Coal Creek Drive.

Commission's Evening Program A Big Success

The images of trains rumbling through Superior was an important part of the "History of Railroading in Colorado," the slide presentation made by Larry Dorsey at The Superior Historical Commission's first ever evening program on April 21st.

More than forty people came to the Town Hall to be transported to the past via slides of old railroading photographs. Dorsey's narration covered a general history of trains in Colorado with a special supplemental section covering trains in Superior and Boulder.

Audience members were able to ask questions and share memories, then were treated to refreshments provided by the Town of Superior.

The Commission plans the evening meetings being a regular event. The next meeting will be in the fall, so keep an eye out for information concerning the next session.

Walls of Water Brought Woes to Superior

Throughout the passage of human history, people either learned to live with and adapt to cycles of nature or suffer the consequences. The scarcity or surplus of water is one particular cycle that is always a concern for Coloradans and for those living in the Boulder Creek and Coal Creek drainages. Frequently in the history of Boulder County did these two streams become fierce and mighty with a huge excess of water, overflowing their banks, the resulting floods leaving havoc and destruction in their wake.

In addition the perils of high waters during spring runoff, there are times in Colorado when the mountain rains persist for days, the thin layer of mountain soil eventually becoming saturated, leaving no other place for the rains to go but down the already overburdened streams and rivers. When such watercourses break out of the mountain canyons on to the plains, they bring with them great waves of water and tons of debris behind it.

Such was the case in 1935 when Coal Creek, swollen by intense rain and snow, unleashed a torrent of water on the Town of Superior in what was to be the first of two significant floods in that decade. The Rocky Mountain News reported that "Coal Creek, a normally shallow meandering body of water, was running high, turbulent and muddy after rain and snow hit the Denver-Boulder area. The creek is located about six miles southeast of Boulder on McCaslin Road."



This scene is from the south bank of Coal Creek at Second Avenue looking northwest. Violet Bonelli Gardner's house, just across the creek, was moved to 122 E. Coal Creek Drive through the assistance of the American Red Cross.

In a recollection of the 1935 flood in a Superior school project, student Robert Chavez wrote that a wall of water covered all the ground from the railroad tracks to the creek and that he saw the water pick up a road grader and Mr. Phillips' cows and beehives as it moved eastward. In what might be either fact or youthful exaggeration, Robert went on to say that the Walker house was covered by "one and a half feet of hail."



Two men stand on the Third Avenue Bridge damaged by the 1938 flood. Notice the pipe handrails. These were painted red, thus, this bridge was often referred to as the "Red Bridge." The tank in the background supplied water to the town.

Superior was hit with an even more devastating flood in 1938. After this torrent raged through town, one of the town's two bridges was destroyed and the other severely damaged, houses were moved from their foundations, and others suffered from a variety of impairments. One section of the Second Avenue Bridge, once called the "White Bridge" was wiped out and the Third Avenue, or "Red Bridge", was permanently ruined. Residents had to let the water level drop, and then ford the creek since both bridges were out of commission.

Herbert Morrison another participant in the 1938 School Project wrote that when the "upper bridge" or Third Avenue Bridge was destroyed, not only could they not find the bridge, but they offered "a five dollar reward to the person who found it." The Second Avenue Bridge was eventually rebuilt and is still in use today.

In addition to the bridge damage, the flood moved the houses of the Luxner family and Violet Bonelli Gardner from their foundations. Both of these homes were then moved north of Coal Creek and are still in Original Superior. The American Red Cross helped Violet Gardner move her home to 122 Coal Creek and the former Luxner house is now at 202 W. Coal Creek Drive.

Any damage from flood was significant to hard working coal miners in Superior, but destruction here didn't compare to a June day in 1894 when, after days of soaking mountain rains, flood waters burst from Boulder Canyon, inflicting destruction in the town of Boulder at a level not seen before or since. A major contributing factor to the resulting ruin in Boulder was the 38 railroad bridges from the mouth of the canyon to the town of Sunset far up Four Mile Canyon. Each time a bridge washed out, its wreckage accumulated at the next bridge and that contributed



These photos show the destruction in Boulder from the 1894 flood. Above is the Fourth Street railroad bridge, ties still attached to the rails and the bridge turned into a ribbon. Below, locomotive 155 sits stranded in flood water west of Broadway. The Greeley, Salt Lake and Pacific railroad had to stop operation temporarily due to devastation



in turn to that bridge's destruction.

"Sixty hours of continuous rain had transformed the quiet little stream into a raging river. . . And boulders crashed and roared. . ." as the flood stuck Boulder, according the Daily Camera account.

The flood destroyed the Boulder rail yards, dislocating, buildings, rail cars, heavy steam locomotives, and to the chagrin of patrons and the delight of the pious, the town's red light district.

News From Superior as Reported in the 1947 Boulder Daily Camera by Frank E. Nichols, age 9

Dorothy Kupfner's cow ran a nail in her foot and now the nail is coming out the other side.

My baby sister, Dotty Kay, had her second birthday Saturday. We call her Sandy because she is redheaded and brown eyed like me.

They tore down the tippie to the Industrial Mine. (August, 1947, ed.)

Jimmy Luxner had a birthday Monday. Now he is ten.

The striking stone depot at 13th and Water Street (now Canyon Boulevard) was partially inundated but withstood the deluge.

The Eldorado Springs resort was walloped by the flooding South Boulder Creek on a number of occasions. Two incidents in particular were the floods of 1896 and the same 1938 flood that hit Superior just a few miles away



In 1938, rampaging South Boulder Creek undercut the Elorado Springs Resort dancehall resulting in its collapse. The hotel in the background suffered a destructive fire in 1939 and was never used again

Although the need for water in our arid region is great, one hopes there will not be a repeat of those sodden days of the past!

Sources: Superior Historical Commission Lost Superior; Arsenault, Superior A Folk History; Sylvia Patten, Boulder: Evolution of a City; Forrest Crossen, The Switzerland Trail of America; Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, Boulder CO for photos, page 2.

One of our year-old shepherd pups became the mother of 11 puppies.

John Zancanelli had his tonsils out.

Superior Historical Commission

Errol Waligorski ~ Chair

Denzil Acklin ~ Vice Chair

Bob Morgan ~ Treasurer

Larry Dorsey ~ Secretary and Editor of Superior Historian

Meetings are held the third Friday of the month at 10:00 A.M. in the Town Hall. All are welcome.